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CONVICT LIFE.

PERSONS who are not very old can remember the time when crimes such as highway robbery, burglary, and forgery were punishable by death on the scaffold; and when crimes of a less aggravated kind were visited by transportation to penal colonies for life. The punishments were severe, but in a sense they were effectual. Society got rid of its torments. With milder views came the present system, which aims at the moral and intellectual improvement of offenders through the agency of penal discipline for longer or shorter periods. Without wishing to go back to the old merciless practices, one feels that the new and humane methods of punishment are far from satisfactory. In some cases, they may fulfil the desired reclamation; but it is too clear that for the most part the criminal class is not lessened, if it be not increased, in numbers. The penalties fail in deterrent influence. Obviously, large masses of people prefer a life of habitual crime, interspersed though it be with imprisonment. In short, a prison is viewed as a pleasant place of retirement, instead of being the terror it ought to be. Society would need to think over the whole subject. The present state of things cannot with decency go on much longer.

That our penal system signally fails in the manner we have summarised, is the accusation made in a volume before us—the personal experiences of a convict (*Convict Life*, by a Ticket-of-Leave Man. London: Wyman & Sons, 1879). The writer is a man of education, and his work bears frequent evidence to his discernment and judgment. He narrates his story perspicuously, and with an unaffected sincerity of tone that carries conviction with it.

After reaching middle life in the character of a gentleman, and with the reputation of an honourable man, our author confesses that he was weak enough to enter upon a course of dissipation at the advent of a terrible domestic calamity. On this supervened crime; and one 'who had never

before darkened the doors of a police court,' was sent 'to herd with professional thieves in penal servitude for seven years.' In these words on the first page of the book is struck the keynote of the book. It is a protest by a criminal it is true, but yet for the most part a law-observing member of Society, against the system which levels to one common standard of degradation him who has once lapsed and him who is a declared and persevering marauder upon Society. He has no sympathy with the criminal class, nor with those who pity the thieves on account of the hideous dress they wear, or because their hair is cropped, or their beds hard, or their beef tough. He is quite right. Judging from the minute personal reminiscences, the physical comfort of criminals is far greater than most seamen enjoy; they are more daintily treated than the miners of Lancashire and Wales; their food is more nourishing and their bedding more luxurious than of the ordinary agricultural hind in English rural districts. Poor honesty has therefore every reason to complain that murderers and felons have more than their deserts of this world's enjoyments given them out of honesty's hardly paid taxes.

The free criminal population in England is a vast army, usually estimated at about one hundred thousand in number! These men are wholly destructive consumers; they live on the fruits of other men's labour; and their misdirected skill in filching is an art which each thief is eager to teach to any one who will listen. The Long Firm is an association of the most tenacious vitality; and amongst the main sources of its strength is the association of thieves in convict prisons, with free opportunity for elaborate schemes of predatory enterprise. The prisons are good cages, but bad reformatories; and outside, the police system is an excellent detector of crime committed, but the worst of preventives. Consequently, nefarious practices are neither prevented nor repressed. To sustain a charge, not to prevent a crime, seems to be the main object of the police-officer. A case in point occurs to mind. A policeman at the Liverpool Docks saw a suspicious character prowling

about. Ensconcing himself close at hand, Policeman X waited and afforded the thief full opportunity to declare his intentions. At length he did so by making off with, we think, a quantity of cotton, large quantities of which find their way to the dishonest receivers at that great entrepôt. Now, if Policeman X had wished to reach the fountain-head of crime, he would have followed the stolen goods to their destination, and bagged two birds with one stone. With such an object in view, his connivance—for it was nought else—in the theft would have been explicable. As a matter of fact he arrested the thief as soon as he had left the Dock Estate; and we suppose the 'clever capture' was lauded in the local press, and gained for him the approbation of his chiefs.

Comparatively few instances can be pointed to by the police, of the prevention of crime. Hundreds of examples they can adduce of captures more or less clever; but even this detection of crime is far from being satisfactorily performed. And it is a sad subject for reflection that the government prisons are perfect schools of crime, in which laziness is encouraged, leisure for conversation and conspiracy afforded, and a merely perfunctory course of education and of religious teaching all that there is of pretended reformatory effort.

Ingenious methods of depredation have not infrequently been disclosed in these columns, to interest and, if possible, safeguard our readers. Some of the tricks exposed by our author are extremely clever devices of the enemy. Officers of Excise, for example, might profitably turn their attention to such public-houses as make a practice of receiving leather portmanteaus, these seemingly innocent articles of baggage being often skillfully constructed bottles, containing up to two gallons of new spirits from illicit distilleries. Nor are these places always in poor or suspected neighbourhoods. The clever criminal knows a better trick. He takes a respectable villa, and under cover of this irreproachable exterior, pursues his nefarious craft. The only real difficulty—and it is but a slight one after all—is the procuring of the raw material. Another rascal was in the habit of 'earning' a good living by the sale of sapphire rings. These are set in gold, with eight real brilliants, easily recognisable as genuine. But the centre stone is but two pieces of colourless topaz, joined with Venice turpentine, and with a bit of blue glass sandwiched between. The topaz resists the file, the diamonds are genuine, and the pawnbroker is thus easily victimised.

One fellow served an eight years' 'lagging' on pretty easy terms. In thieves' language, 'he did it on his head.' His sentence was on account of a notorious diamond robbery in the now well-known style. Fashionable lodgings in Mayfair, horse and brougham, West-end jeweller, wife desirous of inspecting four thousand pounds-worth of jewellery, assistant chloroformed, escape of the thief—these were the elements of the adventure. His wife was watched, and the thief trapped when he returned to England to take her off to America; but the money was gone. And after a lenient and utterly incommensurate punishment, this rascal was discharged to continue his practices. He said that he had perfected a scheme to defy detection,

and by which he intended to make a fortune out of New York bankers.

Another phase of convict life quite as pernicious as the facilities offered for conspiracy and instruction in the thieves' art, is the never-ending lesson of laziness inculcated there. Indoor labour is of the lightest description, and the work of the outdoor gangs is by no means comparable in severity with the ordinary work of coal-miners or agricultural labourers. The dock porters who in our sea-port towns earn their four shillings a day, labour much more strenuously than the hardest-worked convict. And here we must insist upon the fact that the honest artisan and labourer in England is condemned by the very nature of his position to hard labour for life. The death-rate in the open world ranges up to forty per thousand in some towns. In convict prisons, despite the fact that the criminal classes are abandoned wretches, given to the commission of the most disgusting crimes, and that they bring with them into prison constitutions sapped by excess and debauchery, the rate of mortality, we are told, is only thirteen per thousand. Hence the grim joke of one of the comic papers which depicted a doctor and his patient, to whom the former ordered the novel prescription of a month's sojourn in jail as a cure for the effects of overwork. For the convict there is almost complete immunity from risk. Outside, the sailor risks his life for two pounds a month; and the miner dares the perils of the earth for wages not very much more liberal. But light as is the labour required from criminals, they use all kinds of artifices to shirk it. 'The most earnest prayer,' says our author, 'of the professional thief might be thus translated: "From the sacredness of work, and from all other sacredness, good Lord, deliver me." The first object in life to this end is to 'fetch the farm'—that is, to get into the infirmary. Concerning the means employed to this end, the thieves compare notes, and evolve the most complex systems from their perverted imaginations by which to 'best the croker,' in other words, cheat the doctor. In the infirmary, a prisoner gets a good bed, and the close association of many other thieves in a large warm dormitory. 'He gets nice food, and he gets what every thief in England adores above everything else except drink—I mean entire laziness. He can lie on his back, eat, chat with his neighbour, and plot future villainy. The infirmary is the convicted thief's paradise.'

Other methods are also successfully employed by those old hands at crime who wish 'to do their lagging on their head,' that is, with as little discomfort as possible to themselves. Old thieves in for a second or third term are particularly adept in making themselves easy. They are treated almost like comrades by the warders, and curry favour with them by keeping watch for the advent of superior officers, or by assisting them in detecting minor infractions of the rules by novices, ever the scapegoats of others' delinquencies. Moreover, though the possession of tobacco is a heinous offence, severely punishable, and though only through the warders tobacco can enter a prison, yet the old hands frequently obtain this luxury. It is alleged, we cannot tell with what truth, that warders receive black-mail from the friends of convicts. These are matters which will doubtless be inquired into.

There is an utterly fallacious idea abroad that convict labour must not be allowed to compete with free labour. Against this we merely say, that if it be just that the honest man should labour for his bread, it is no less just that the criminal also should labour for his livelihood. If any man will not work neither shall he eat, is even yet a good principle to teach those who presume to live by depredations and not by work. Provided always that the products of convict labour are only sold at the market price, no injustice whatever is done to free men working in the same kind. We cannot force criminals to earn their bread when at large; we can at least punish them for getting it dishonestly; and common-sense teaches that whilst in confinement, they should be habituated to the hard, really hard labour of the average working-man, and not be allowed to make a mere play of working, as is stated to be often the case.

Out of doors the evil is even worse. Not the most ignorant hind would find fault with convict labour applied to the reclamation of bog and waste land. But although this is the theoretical aim of the outdoor labour, nothing has as yet been done worthy of notice. The men have similar freedom for plotting villainy, for degrading talk, and for proselytism in crime, as in the shops. And one general lesson is taught indiscriminately to all, taught not orally and weakly by precept, but forcibly and permanently in practice and example. That general lesson is 'the doctrine, that time and labour are of no value.'

What is most urgently needed in our penal system is a short sharp system of dealing with the casual offender, and entire separation of him from the contaminations of the other class. The habitual offenders should have their deserts—severe labour. What they have voluntarily shirked when free, should be forced upon them when confined. And if brave men risk their lives—say in the mines—surely we need be under no compunction in condemning the criminal to that kind of labour. We shall be glad to hear that the subject in all its bearings is carefully reconsidered. Present arrangements, the outcome of heedless philanthropists and crotcheteers, are little better than a scandal. A remedy must be found somehow.

A LIFE'S ATONEMENT.

CHAPTER XI.—CONTINUED.

HASTINGS pursued his leisurely way to Montague Gardens, untroubled and light of heart. He beguiled the way by self-satisfied reflection. Yet he was in his way a philosopher, and valued himself pretty accurately at times. 'There is a little demon inside you, my friend,' he told himself, 'who overmasters you upon occasion, and clouds your finer faculties.' Having nobody else to chaff at this juncture, he chaffed himself, laughing at his own incongruities of character and of speech, and looking on at himself like a quite disinterested spectator, and enjoying the spectacle. Life had been so far an uninterrupted series of passages of light comedy. He was leading comedian and audience in one. He looked on at himself, admiring his own *sang-froid* and

impudence and jollity. He talked as much to himself as to others, and in the same strain. He was sufficient audience to himself, and perpetually aired himself behind the comedy footlights for his own delectation. He admired himself beyond measure, and thought himself at bottom one of the humblest men in the world.

Arriving at Frank's rooms, he found the artist hard at work, and jovial. At the sight of the picture, now nearly completed, Hastings stood still in genuine admiration. The artist had struggled after a very difficult and subtle effect, and had all but perfectly succeeded in catching it. An autumn corn-field, with shocks of corn here and there. A level country melts gradually into the distance. The late sunlight is so faint and dim that only the faintest shadows lie upon the ground. They are made the fainter by a pallid gleam of moonlight, which struggles for supremacy with the light of the fading sun, and will gain it before long. It is this delicate blending of light which makes the beauty of the picture. Perhaps the *technique* of the work is not altogether perfect. Over that let the critics quarrel if they will. But the poetry of the work is pure and strong. Its grouping is beyond all cavil. The ideal at which it aims is high, and only missed by the merest trifle. Only missed by that mere trifle because the painter has not yet arrived at the complete artistic mastery of himself. You feel somehow a suspicion of juvenility in the worker. You may see the picture now if you choose—at any time when the family is in town or abroad—by a journey to Chesterwood Castle. It is one of the gems of my lord's almost unrivalled collection. It has taken its place, and is pointed out now as the work of one who was the most promising artist of his time. The housekeeper will make a vague shot or two at the mystery which this story for the first time clears. She will tell you, if you care to listen, that she knew the young gentleman who painted it, and will describe him to you, and will relate further that a niece of hers was upper housemaid in the household of the artist's father. She will dwell on the respectability of that old county family, and on the melancholy enigma of the handsome and gifted young artist's fate.

'Fairholt,' said Hastings, laying a hand upon his friend's shoulder, 'this is noble; this is great; this is worthy of you.'

'It will sell, anyhow,' returned Frank, taking his friend's enthusiasm for badinage.

'My dear Fairholt,' said Hastings, 'I mean it, every word. It is my fate to be believed when I desire to be discredited, and doubted when I would be believed. This is a great work, Fairholt.'

'Be serious for once, and tell me what you really think of it.'

'I am about to give you practical proof of what I think of it. I am here on business. Wait until I have finished, and then tell me I am incredible. I am commissioned to buy this work; I am commissioned to offer you four hundred guineas for it. Now, I advise you—put another hundred on it. I advise you as a friend. Put another hundred on it. Do now—to oblige me.'

'You look serious,' said Frank, standing before him pipe in mouth.

'The Rhadamanthine gloom which veils my

brow,' returned Hastings, with an airy cheerfulness of explanation, 'is but an earnest of the soul within.'

'Do you really mean that you have a commission to buy this picture?' Frank asked, pointing at it with his maul-stick.

'I am painfully reminded of the statement of Dr Watts, where, with a profound philosophy which was a real credit to him, he remarks: "A liar we can never trust, though he should speak the thing that's true."'

'I don't think you would have the execrable taste to do this in jest.'

'You do me honour,' replied Hastings.

'Doubt that the stars are fire;
Doubt that the earth doth move;
Doubt truth to be a liar,
But never doubt

that I have a commission to purchase this work of art for the sum of four hundred guineas.'

'Then I have done work for the day. Come out, Hastings, and dine somewhere. Who's the purchaser?'

'There, I regret to say, I am forbidden to speak. The purchaser folds himself in mystery.'

'This is too absurd,' said Frank, a little angrily.

'My dear boy,' answered Hastings, 'but that I am forbid to tell the secrets of my prison-house, I would a tale unfold. Don't get angry, Fairholt. Now am I serious. The fact of the case is this, I am deputed by a gentleman who does not wish his name to appear, to offer you four hundred guineas for this picture. If you accept, the money will be paid within one week of the opening of the Winter Exhibition. If you refuse, the envoy retires discomfited.'

'Refuse! I have no intention that way, I assure you. Come. Is it your father, Hastings?'

'It is not my father, nor any relative of mine, or friend of mine. I am simply the agent. Am I to say you accept?'

'Yes. By Jove, sir, this is a fortunate hit! Do you know, Hastings, that I sold you daub at the Academy last week? Got two hundred for it. I am like that jolly old fellow the village blacksmith, and can look the whole world in the face, for I owe not any man. Paid all my debts. Deposited coin to meet the bill which dear old Will backed for me only a week or two ago. Free of all responsibilities. Five-and-forty pound to the good. Four hundred in prospective, and a quarterly allowance due in a fortnight.'

'I believe you dropped a hint just now about dining somewhere?'

'Which I did,' responded Frank. 'Which I will demean myself by standing treat to the commercial party wot negotiates.'

With a laugh, Frank flung himself out of the studio, and in a few minutes returned radiant in his pet artistic costume. Booted and gloved as delicately as a lady, his air was elate and sprightly. The well-browned meerschau—Bohemian emblem—sent forth clouds. Removing the pipe from his lips, he roared forth scraps of the *Marseillaise*, and made tragic passes at Hastings with his walking-cane. Next seizing that impassive young gentleman by the arm, he sallied forth into the street with such a beaming pleasure in his handsome face, that people positively turned to

look after him. His spirits were at fever-heat, and he chattered incessantly. The streets were growing cool after the heat of the day; and when a man is happy, even the streets of London may be pleasant to him. The shadows were growing longer; there was a soft, hazy languor in the air. In these prosperous quarters, the window-gardens looked charming. The variegated blinds did something towards destroying the monotony of the streets. The very 'cooee' of the milkman was pleasant. Who cannot remember such times? I remember that London has been beautiful to me. But it was years ago.

If you are travelling from Montague Gardens to Pall-Mall, your pleasantest way is through St James's Park, though when hurried you may find a shorter route. Frank and Hastings were not hurried, but the contrary. Is there any beauty in a manly face like that given by unaffected gaiety? I think not. The young artist looked like a veritable sunbeam—so bright, so jovial. Nursemaids turned round and looked upon him with undisguised admiration, and their charges brightened at his merry, noisy laughter. Youth and high spirits sparkled in him like champagne, and flushed his face, and gave light to his eyes. His laugh rose like a bubbling fountain of wine. He and Hastings strolled through the park, and out of its sunlight and freshness into the shadows of Pall-Mall; dusty despite the one ribbon-like streak of moisture which the recent watering-cart had left behind.

Entering Pall-Mall, and taking the first turn to the left, you may find the site of the club at which these two dined that day. The club has vanished. Its members are distributed through the four quarters of the globe. Some are dead and buried long ago. They were all young fellows then—mostly followers of the arts. Very gay, very noisy, very untrammelled, very happy they were. The club system was a younger and a fresher thing then than now, and all the more enjoyment was therefore to be extracted from it. There are no clubs like it nowadays. The piano in the smoke-room—the nightly songs and speeches and discussions—the select section, a club within a club, which called itself the Claret Conclave, and whose members drank that wine alone within the club confines—the chorus wherein all men then present nightly joined—the mustached and olive-complexioned gentlemen of the Royal Opera, who came down late at night and sometimes stayed until early in the morning, making the walls sweetly vocal—the eminent old tragedian who spouted there, 'mouthing his hollow oes and aes' in sonorous dissertations upon *Hamlet*—the eminent old comedian who told his droll stories with so droll an air—where be all these things and people now? They are dead and gone, lady—they are dead and gone. Let the turf be green and light above them, and the stone of remembrance not unkindly graven.

The culinary resources of this establishment, though not at that pitch of perfection which satisfies Young England now, were not to be despised. Over the mysteries of the *cuisine* no Parisian *maitre d'hôtel* presided; but was not old Nicholas trained in the very citadel of cookery, and was there his equal in any of the statelier clubs hard by? The club bragged of Nicholas, not without justification. At Frank's special command,

Nicholas went beyond himself. It was another charm of this old club, that when you went to dine there, you held a special consultation with the cook, and arranged your dinner with as much deliberation and care and forethought as you chose to exercise. Nicholas took his clients—let me call them by no meaner name, for his sake—into his confidence. Sure of his resources, and eager and proud to please, he yet advised and persuaded, offering with a humility the more charming for the greatness of him who displayed it, gentle and suasive counsel, not often rejected. Would they give Nicholas but half an hour? Would they not? And at the end of it came such an atonement for delay as few men find in this unsatisfactory world.

All enjoyments come to an end. 'Ethereal, flushed,' these young gentlemen left the table and adjourned to the smoking-room. They were hailed boisterously. It was Music-night, and every man who entered these precincts must sing if the assembled members willed that he should sing. No plea of inability to sing—no excuse of hoarseness would avail. So long as the Gigantic Native sat at the piano, no lapsus of memory could serve as a loophole for escape. For the Gigantic Native knew by heart every song of Europe, or thereabouts, and would roar you the words, line by line, whilst those enormous but facile hands of his went flying over the keys. Now Frank was the swell vocalist of the club, and Hastings was its special singer of comic songs. With what a tragic fury the latter warbled the many-tuned ditties of Sam Cowell. In what a tremendous bass he declaimed 'Behold me! You told me,' and the rest of it. In what *debonair* fashion he related that Alonzo he was handsome and Alonzo he was young. How exquisitely and in what a soft and tender falsetto he trilled forth the protestations of the young lady. And could the Great Sam himself approach him in that exquisite fidelity to the Cockney style and accent which was one of the special features of his presentment of the story of Young Susan and the Ship's Carpen-tee? The varying emphasis of that charming chorus:

Singin' doddle, doddle, doddle, chip, chum, chow,
choora, li, la,

now given with martial fire, and now with melting feeling, and now with scathing sarcasm, who—if not the Great Sam himself—should presume to strive to equal?

And was not Frank poet as well as singer—and had not Herr Broekenyaack set his last to music, and was not the fame thereof bruited abroad? Herr Professor was absent; but the Gigantic Native was there with a blotted manuscript, undecipherable by any man save himself and the Professor, and with it he seated himself at the piano; and after preliminary settlements of his coat and arrangements of his wristbands, as though preparing to tear the instrument in sunder, instead thereof, kissed its keys most delicately with his finger-tips, and tripped through the dainty prelude. Frank stood at the piano, flushed, confident, handsome—a tender sentiment in his heart; for the words were of Maud, and reminded him of her. He closed his eyes for a second, and was back at the gate in the gardens again, and the evening sunlight was tranquil on the tranquil

fields. But the note of preparation sounded, and he sang this song:

Her spirit dwells about me like a thought;
I know her far, yet feel her near the while;
For me all rapture of delight is caught
In her remembered smile.
And London's wintry evening, mirk and gray,
Is fair as summer's fairest, when the skies
Fade into one pure azure, and the day,
Worn out with pleasure, dies!

Great applause followed; for they were generous and genial young people all, and proud of their comrades and of their achievements, and they had a sublime belief in each other, and were bound in the bonds of an enduring brotherhood. So, with rattling of glasses and rapping of tables, and hearty *bravos* and *vivas* in his ears, Frank resumed his seat. We affected whisky-punch here, observe you, we who were not of that cold Claret Conclave. 'Whisky-punch, sir? Yessir.' The very waiter was proud to wait on Frank. Hastings had disseminated the story of the sold pictures. The Academy success of the year was already assured. Frank was the hero of the place and the hour. Hastings had of course told each man privately, and in confidence; and by the time each man felt disposed to impart the confidence to some one else, almost everybody knew. But they all came—to the number of five-and-twenty perhaps—and congratulated Frank in private, and shook hands with him gladly, and told him how pleased they were at his successes.

'Fairholt,' said Hastings, 'this is growing dull and noisy. Dullness is unpleasant, and noise is unpleasant. Combined they are unbearable. Come away.'

'I'll tell you what I'll do,' said Frank gaily. 'I'll give you your revenge. On one condition—that you never ask me to touch a card again. But I won heavily from you last time, old fellow, and I can afford to play to-night, eh?'

'Your star is in the ascendant to-night,' Hastings answered. 'But I like to go where the fight is hottest. Come along. Not here. Let us get away where we can be quiet.'

The time is an hour after midnight, the place the card-room of the club in which you first met Hastings. There are four men playing at *vingt-et-un*. Two of them we know; the other two you would probably not care to know.

'Cleaned out?' says Hastings, looking up at Frank.

'Cleaned out,' responds Frank with an idiotic laugh, and a lurch forward at a tumbler.

'Wait here a moment,' Hastings answers, and rising somewhat unsteadily, leaves the room.

There is an exultant light in Mr Tasker's eyes as he enters, with Hastings, a minute or two afterwards. A smile flickers at the corners of his mouth.

Frank comes to meet them.

'No, Hastings,' he says with an air of stern determination, 'I have no more to do with this fellow.'

'Why, Mr Vairhold,' says Mr Tasker cheerfully, 'you cannot surely bear malice for a hasty word. I am very sorry. I apologise with all my heart.'

Frank looks upon him for a moment, and relaxes. 'You're a good fellow, Tasker. I'm afraid I have been very unpolite. Excuse me.'

They shake hands, and the foolish young fellow laughs again. They retire to a table at the far end of the room.

'In your name, Mr Vairhold?' asks Tasker, sitting there with a pen in his hand.

'Of course,' Frank answers. 'Be quiet, Hastings.—Hastings is hard-up, you know,' he tells Tasker with another idiotic laugh.

'It is lucky,' says Tasker in a low voice, 'that I have gash about me. It is all a jance. I have seventy-five. Will that do?'

'That's enough,' says Frank lurching at the notes.

'Zhall I zay at three months?' asks Mr Tasker. 'I will not zay a hundred. I do not like level figures. Zay ninety-eight pounds ten; for value received. Thank you.' Mr Tasker puts the promissory-note into his pocket-book, shakes hands, and goes. Frank calls him back.

'You'll forget all about that, you know, old fellow. You're a good fellow.'

'O yes!' says Mr Tasker with genial good-humour. 'I am a good yellow. We are all good yellows.' As he goes down-stairs he rubs his hands gleefully. 'What a stroke of luck!' He pauses beneath the lamp-light at the foot of the stairs, and looks at the note again. 'At three months—Ninety-eight pounds ten.'

RECOLLECTIONS OF AN EQUESTRIAN MANAGER.

BY C. W. MONTAGUE.

THIRD PAPER.

I HAVE already spoken at some length of our stay at Cardiff in the winter of 1860-61, and related a few of the incidents connected with our performances there. At the close of the season we started on a tenting tour through South Wales, at about the time when the fresh, warm, cheering days of early spring were making us forget the rigours of the past winter months. At such a time, and passing through scenery so romantic as that of Wales, a journey of this description has many attractions; and in spite of the really arduous work of the constantly recurring performances, the members of the company have a very pleasant time of it. This is more especially true in any well-appointed concern under efficient management and well established in the popular favour. But with some of the small strolling companies that traverse the kingdom in every direction and at all seasons of the year, the life they lead is, to say the least, anything but romantic. Having used the words 'tenting tour,' it occurs to me that my readers may perhaps be desirous to know more fully the meaning of the expression. I therefore propose to describe briefly the manner in which these undertakings are conducted, and the kind of life a travelling company of recognised standing leads.

It may be well to explain that there are two distinct kinds of circuses—firstly, those that perform in permanent buildings only; secondly, those that 'tent' in the spring and summer, and occupy buildings in the winter. Of the first kind there are at the time of writing (1879) five companies in the United Kingdom—namely, Newsome's, Hengler's, Cooke's, Adams', and Keith's. These never perform in tents. Of the other class, there

are eight recognised circuses; their proprietors being Messrs Sanger, Myers, Pinders, Batty, Powell and Clarke, F. Ginnett, G. Ginnett, and Swallow. These are the 'tenting' companies, giving their performances for the greater portion of the year in the tent which they carry about from town to town. Besides the names given, there are a few other small companies; but these are carried on by speculators only, who as a rule last but a few months, or even less than that. It is a well-known fact that none but those who are trained to the work from their youth, can ever properly manage a company or insure its financial success.

A matter of the first importance in projecting a tour is to prepare beforehand a plentiful supply of novelties, to be produced at the various performances, in order to serve as an additional attraction to those who perhaps would not favour us with their patronage, did they think that we were always grinding away, like a musical box, at the same old themes. There must be something new and good. Some unusually graceful or daring rider; some clever conjurer or mirth-provoking clown; some rare equine specimen, beautifully marked and wonderfully trained—all or some of these; and added to them, a variety of entirely new pieces for the company in general must be secured, brought together, and worked up into an attractive programme; proper steps being taken to let the public know in good time what treats there are in store for them. In order thoroughly to attain this latter point and to make other timely arrangements, each company sends forward an 'agent in advance' along the identical route to be followed by the circus, and arriving in each selected town some days, or even weeks before the date fixed for the performances. This agent's duties are multifarious and of a responsible nature; and indeed upon his shrewdness and experience not a little of the success of the tour depends. His first duty is to make prompt arrangements for thoroughly 'billing' the town—that is, displaying the large coloured pictorial and printed announcements on all the available hoardings, dead-walls, bridges, and other conspicuous places in the town and immediate neighbourhood. Then a suitable site has to be chosen on which to erect the tent with its adjuncts. Lodgings for the principals must be secured; and what is of no less importance, good stabling for the stud of valuable horses. All conveniences in fact in any way necessary for the comfort of the company are arranged beforehand, and are ready for them when they arrive. The agent in advance is to a travelling circus what scouts are to an invading army; with this difference, that he is the herald of a peaceful host which seeks no triumphs but those of Art, and strives to secure its conquests by leaving behind it in each town a strong garrison of pleasurable recollections.

To complete his round of duties, the agent sends back by post to the proprietor, copies of all contracts made by him, particulars of the lodgings secured for the company, full information for the stud-groom as to which are the best stables for the more valuable horses, descriptions of the road to be traversed; and in short, places the proprietor on the same footing as though the latter had himself visited the town and made all the arrangements. It is easy to perceive that by following out this methodical system, all chance of confusion when

the company arrives is entirely avoided. The agent having thus fulfilled his task, passes on to the next town, and leaves us at liberty to turn our attention to the coming guests.

I will suppose, for the sake of illustration, that a performance has been given in the town of A., and that it is intended to repeat the performance the next day at the town of B., say fifteen miles distant. Before the company separates for the evening, the hour of departure on the following morning is fixed and announced, and other necessary arrangements made. When long distances have to be traversed, the circus is often on the road as early as four in the morning. But for the distance above stated, the vans would start about six o'clock, and reach their destination, under average circumstances, at or a little after nine. Upon their arrival in the town, all sections of the company have their duties to perform, and not a moment to lose in setting about them. The vans having been driven straight to the chosen ground, and left there until required for 'parade,' the stud-groom sees that the horses are taken to their stables to be thoroughly groomed and fed. The principal members of the company seek out their lodgings and take a slight repast; while the tent-master and his assistants, having unloaded from each van its share of the tent, commence at once to erect that ephemeral structure, and to arrange within it the boxes, pit, and gallery for the spectators, and the ring for the performers. By noon the tent is complete—the tent-master being liable to a fine if not then ready—and the company begin to assemble in time to dress for parade. All the horses but a chosen few are gaily trapped in what is called their 'dress harness,' and are attached to the different caravans that are now relieved of their loads. Some of the company are mounted upon the choice horses of the stud—magnificent, proud-spirited, high-stepping creatures these animals are—while others, representing various allegorical characters, such as Britannia, Victory, Peace, Plenty, &c. are prominently enthroned on the vehicles. At last all is ready; the signal for the start is given, and the band going first, strikes up a lively air: the drummer having a lively faith in the power of his instrument to attract a crowd, plies his sticks vigorously—Plenty and not Peace being the goddess of his choice—crowds of ragged urchins and well-dressed children, and grown-up people no less plentiful, appear as if by magic on the scene, and elbow each other about in their endeavour to obtain a good position to see the 'cavalcade' go by. Thus the principal thoroughfares of the town and suburbs are paraded until towards 2 p.m., at which time the pay office is opened for the morning performance, and the audience begin to take their places in the tent.

At 2.30 the performance commences; the clown comes tumbling into the ring, and having brought himself somehow to a momentary stand-still, opens the proceedings with the original remark, at which every one laughs for the thousandth time, 'Here we are again!' after which he goes on with his tumbling, or carries on a wordy passage-of-arms with the polite and forbearing ring-master, until the equestrian business begins. The performance is usually over about 4 p.m.; and soon after this the company partake of their principal meal—their dinner. A word or two on the all-important

subject of dining will furnish a natural close to the day's proceedings and to this short description of them. The company forms itself into what are called 'catering parties,' usually consisting of six or seven persons, one member of each party—who is called the 'caterer'—being appointed to superintend the commissariat department. It is his duty, whether the stay in a town be long or short, to arrange terms for his party or 'mess' at some hotel or other establishment, and to see that the catering is good in quality and style. These messes usually have nicknames given them, according to the status of the members, or their character for lavishness or economy. Thus perhaps in a single company you may find such names as the 'Royal,' the 'Champagne,' the 'Quisby' mess—Quisby being a synonym for 'cheap,' and a word that has got into use in other quarters besides the ring and the stage. The mention of these two institutions together reminds me of another nickname common to both. The proprietor of a circus or lessee of a theatre, instead of being spoken of familiarly as the 'master' or 'governor' or 'gaffer,' frequently goes by the euphonious title of 'the Rumcull.'

I will now return to the individual tour of which I had commenced to write. After completing our pilgrimage through South Wales, we found upon entering the Midlands again, that our American rivals, Messrs Howes and Cushing, were playing sad havoc among the English proprietors by the wholesale manner in which they had gone into the business. Their company had been so greatly increased in strength, that it had been divided, first into two distinct companies, then into three; and ultimately there were four American companies belonging to this single proprietary, competing keenly against us for popular support. As it is quite useless for two circuses to perform in the same town at or near the same time, this multiplication of rival establishments had the direct effect of limiting our field of operations, or rather, I should say, of compelling us to extend our operations into fresh fields and pastures new. For this reason, then, we 'took the fairs' at the various towns on our route; so that by offering special attractions, we received, in spite of the not very good state of trade in the district through which we passed, a fair share of support, and had no cause to complain of the pecuniary results. A few incidents connected with the remainder of our tour may be worth relating here.

A laughable but to me unpleasant incident happened at Eccleshall, in the following manner. I was staying at the *Royal Oak*, the landlord of which had formerly been a commercial traveller in those parts, had 'used the house,' had seen and loved the widowed landlady thereof, and finally had become her husband and landlord of the snug little inn. As a guest at the house, his welcome had invariably been cordial; as a suitor for the hand of the disconsolate widow, he had found little cause for complaint at the manner of his reception; but after the nuptial knot had been tied—Well, I will relate the incident; merely remarking that the Goodman was always loath to lose a cheerful guest, and to have to fall back upon the resources of the family circle for good company. I had arrived on Saturday, had completed my business, had spent Sunday with mine

host and his spouse, the hour for my departure on the following morning had arrived, and my groom had driven round to the door with my dog Lion, a fine Newfoundland, at his heels. 'That's a fine dog of yours,' quoth the host, who had already shaken hands with me.

'Yes,' I replied; 'he's a handsome creature; and what's more, he's as clever as he's handsome.'

'Is he indeed now? Well, I know of a most extraordinary dog close by; didn't think of it before; you must see it before you go—won't take five minutes.'

Though pressed for time, I felt obliged to humour the man, and accordingly accompanied him down the street until he stopped at a high pair of gates leading into the yard of a large tannery. Being intimate with the proprietor, my host passed through the small door and bade me follow. The yard was full of pits used for the various processes of preparing and tanning the hides; the edges of these holes were level with the ground, without any protection, and each pit was full of hide in pickle; the liquid in which they were immersed having acquired a most vile and fetid smell of decomposing animal matter. Now for the dog.

'Look yonder,' said my guide; 'there's the dog. Isn't he a fine creature?'

I looked. A hideous monster met my gaze—a great bull-dog of the famous Spanish breed, with a head big enough for three, and the most formidable pair of jaws that one could wish to behold. I shrank back instinctively.

'Don't be frightened,' said my companion in reassuring tones; 'he's as quiet as a lamb when he knows you.'

'Very possibly,' I rejoined; 'and until he *does* know me, I prefer keeping at a safe distance;' saying which, I retreated another step or two backwards, and fell plump into a tan-pit! How I managed with my friend's assistance to scramble out again, is more than I can tell. The smell from my soaking garments was atrocious and well-nigh unbearable. However, there was nothing to be done but hurry back to the hotel and make the best of a bad business. Arrived at the door, I told my man to follow me up to my room with a complete change of clothes, which I always carried with me, and then I entered the house. Drip, drip, drip! Every step I took along the well-cleaned floor and up the neatly carpeted stairs into my room, a little stream of the horrible stuff ran freely down, spoiling everything where I went. As for the landlady, at first she witnessed all in silent horror; but after she had 'got the scent,' she 'gave tongue' with a vengeance! I stripped and washed from head to foot, put on my clean clothes, had the others stuffed into an empty corn-bag to be washed at the next town, and was soon on my way. But unpleasant as my adventure had proved, it must have been far preferable to the pickle in which my poor friend the landlord would find himself when the guest had quitted the scene!

As just explained, it was the presence of my dog and the landlord's admiration of him that led indirectly to my unsavoury adventure. But I am unwilling to dismiss my noble Lion from these pages without putting it on record that he

was capable of better deeds than getting others into trouble through his good looks.

We had been performing at Allston, a solitary little town surrounded by the Cumberland moors, where human habitations are few and far between, and where, in the winter, travellers have lost their way and perished in the snow. When we started across Allston Moor on our road to Keswick, the ground was covered deeply with snow, which was still falling; thus adding an element of difficulty and even of danger to our journey, considering the scant and imperfect character of the roads, which in some parts had no existence whatever, the direction being indicated by poles placed at long distances apart. When we arrived at Keswick, the tent-master, not having noticed my dog during the morning, came to ask if he was with me. I had not seen him, but felt no anxiety on the matter, as the dog would often roam about and find his way to us again. Presently the property-man came to me to say that he could not find the pulley-blocks and rope—specially constructed for hoisting and straining the tight-rope, a clever performance upon which, by two sisters of the name of Bourne, had been announced beforehand, and would form an important feature in our entertainment. A further search was made, but still the missing articles could not be found. As without these appliances it would be impossible to give the tight-rope performance, I had horses put to a light carriage and drove as rapidly as possible back towards Allston. Arrived near the town, a man informed me that a large dog, which he believed belonged to our company, was sitting in the field a little farther on, where our tent had lately stood. I soon reached the spot, and there sure enough was Lion standing breast-deep in the snow, in the middle of the field. I called to him; but he only wagged his tail and gave a little bark of satisfaction at seeing me, but would not stir from the spot. Jumping out of my vehicle, I crossed the field to where he stood; and beheld, half buried in the snow, the missing blocks and rope! The intelligent and faithful creature knew that the articles had been wrongly left behind, and I do not think it too much to say that he knew or hoped that some one would come back for them, and thus find them and him together. If any one should think I am claiming too much power of thought or insight for my dog, let him study the following incident, for the exact truth of which I vouch, and in corroboration, give the names of the persons and places concerned.

I was driving from Redhill in Surrey to the village of Mersham, about three miles away. When I had proceeded some distance on the road, it began to rain rather fast, and I discovered that I was without my umbrella. The last call I had made in Redhill was at the shop of Mr Kain the chemist, and I felt sure that I had left my umbrella there, standing against the front of the counter. Pulling up under a tree for shelter, I began to consider what I should do, and at the same moment Lion came suddenly round to the front of the trap, as though to learn what we were stopping for. The thought struck me that I might perhaps make Lion my messenger in the matter. If I could only get him to go back to the shop, Mr Kain would probably understand why he had been sent, and would put the umbrella in the

dog's mouth to carry to me. Having engaged Lion's attention, I waved my hand with an onward sweep along the road towards Redhill. The dog's eyes followed my hand readily enough, and then he looked in my face with a puzzled air. Again and again I repeated my gestures, the poor animal looking more perplexed each time, and thinking perhaps that his master was making a ridiculous exhibition of himself. However, I persevered with my efforts; and as I made one vigorous and expressive sweep of the hand, the dog pricked up his ears, the puzzled look vanished from his face, and then, with a little toss of his nose towards me, as though he would have said: 'All right, governor!—I know what you've been driving at,' he started off towards Redhill at the top of his speed, and was soon out of sight round a distant bend of the road. After this intelligent interpretation of my meaning, my readers will scarcely be surprised to hear that before long—in an incredibly short time, I thought—Lion reappeared round the curve carrying in his mouth my missing umbrella, which he delivered up to me with all the demonstrations of satisfaction and pleasure of which a dog is capable.

But the best has yet to come. Up to that moment all I knew, or could know, was that my dog had brought the umbrella for which I sent him. When I returned to Redhill in the evening, I called upon Mr Kain, and thanked him for his trouble; adding, before he had time to speak: 'You managed to understand him, then?'

'Managed to understand him!' he replied, with a curious look on his face. 'O yes; he didn't leave me in doubt very long. Confound the dog! And I've got a nice little bill against you for damages he has done.'

'Why, how's that?' said I in amazement.

'Well, I was standing near the door when your dog came bounding in at the top of his speed, nearly knocking me over. He began sniffing about; and then it struck me that you were returning for your umbrella, which I had found and put behind the counter, and that the dog had got here first. I was just going round to get the umbrella, so as to have it ready for you, when the great animal, after standing up against the counter and sniffing over it, made a spring on to the top, and was down at the back before I could get near him, breaking a lot of bottles and measures and upsetting others in his course. He took your umbrella in his mouth, and tried to jump on to the counter again. But the umbrella kept catching, first one end and then the other; and the space was so narrow that he could not make the leap. As soon as I dared, I took hold of the umbrella, to take it off him; but he held on tight, and would not let me have it; so partly by coaxing and partly by dragging, I got him round to the trap-door, and pulled him through. Then without stopping even to say "Thank you," he bolted through the door, and was off down the street like a shot out of a gun.'

Before quitting the subject of dogs, I will relate the following amusing anecdote. While our circus was at Brighton, a person whom I will call Mr Spill, paid frequent visits to our performances, and soon made himself at home behind the scenes. This gentleman had earned a name for curing numberless disorders that affect dogs and cats,

more especially dogs; and among these again, most especially lapdogs and other petted species so highly treasured by elderly single ladies. One day said Spill to me: 'Mr Montague, I should like you to come and see my infirmary.' (It must be understood that his cures were effected upon his own premises, and that he had adopted the high-sounding title of 'Dog and Cat Infirmary' for his far-famed establishment.) I accepted his invitation with pleasure, thinking that it would prove interesting to inspect the internal arrangements of his peculiar hospital. Arrived at the house—I beg pardon, the infirmary—I expected to see some signs or hear some sounds of Mr Spill's canine patients. Failing to do so, however, I asked my host if he kept his infirmary upstairs. 'O dear no,' he replied. 'Come this way, and I'll soon show you all about it.' I followed him out into the garden; and there, ranged around the stump of an old tree, I beheld a number of broad shallow tubs, bottom upwards, and pierced with holes for ventilation. Under each of these tubs was a dog, the collection of tubs constituting the 'infirmary!' But how about the medicine, the dietary, &c.? Mr Spill's answer to my string of questions was so characteristic, that I will give it in his own words.

You see, said he, I suit the treatment to the disorder. Well-nigh every dog I am sent for to look at is suffering from the same thing—too much to eat and too little to do. They're pampered and messed with and overfed; and when they get here, I just give them a opposite treatment. Only yesterday, I took a little King Charles home to Lady G—. Well, her case is just about like the lot; at least in the main it is. When she first sent for me, I was ushered into her Ladyship's presence, and there was the dog lying in a basket that was stuffed with a feather pillow, and stuck right in front of a blazing fire.

'Ah,' sighed her Ladyship, 'I'm so glad you've come. My little dog seems much worse; he can hardly breathe, poor little darling!'

Well, I hoisted the poor little darling out of the basket—very carefully, you know, and put him on my knees. Dogs never snap at me; we understand each other.

'His nose is very warm, marm,' I said.

'Is it indeed?' said she.

'His eyes aren't at all bright, marm,' I said.

'O no, my good man; they're not like they used to be,' said she.

'And your Ladyship,' I said, just a bit sad, 'his little 'art beats very irregular.'

'Dear me!' said she.

'I assoom,' said I, 'that he is suffering from general nervous debility.'

'You don't say so!' said she.

'There's no doubt about it, marm,' I said; 'though most people as profess to understand dogs would think he'd got the distemper, and would a'most kill him in trying to cure him. But I know just what treatment he wants, marm; for he ain't no worse than the Duchess of B—'s dog, and I cured it.'

'O did you really?' said she. 'Well now, are you obliged to take dear, dear little Floss quite away? Couldn't you pay him daily visits and give him his medicine?'

'O no marm,' I said, 'This case is far too serious for that; he wants constant treatment. I

can do him more good in a week in the infirmary than in a month out.'

'Well, my good man, if he must go he must. But be sure and take very great care of him.' And then she gave me a long list of things I was to give him to eat, things for breakfast and things for dinner and things for tea and supper. And said she: 'The dear little creature is that poorly, he will scarcely touch the daintiest morsels.'

'Yes marm; most probable,' I said. 'But when I bring him back to you, his 'ealth will be so restored and his huppitite so satisfactory that he'll eat dry bread with a relish.'

Well sir, she agreed to pay me a very liberal sum for curing him; and I brought the dog home here and clapped him under one o' them tubs, and left him there all night with nothing to eat, but plenty of clean water. Next morning I threw a lump of bread in; and when I went the next day, he hadn't touched a crumb of it. But the next morning it was mopped clean up; and I gave him a fresh supply—but only dry bread, mind you, and clean water every day. Well sir, in a week the dog had cured himself, and could breathe freely once more, as they say. But I kept him another week, just to earn my money, you know. Her Ladyship had told me to call now and then; so I did, and told her how he was going on. But I didn't tell her he was living under that tub fed on bread and water, because though it sooted the dog admirable, it wouldn't 'a sooted her Ladyship to know it. When I took him home, I kept him under my arm until her Ladyship came into the room and then I set him down.

'Floss!' she cried out, 'why Floss! it's never you! O you dear little pet!' And the dog frisked and bounced about like a india-rubber ball, and barked and wagged his tail as brisk as anything. Then I took a piece of bread from my pocket and threw it on the floor; I'd given him nothing that morning, you know.

'Now you watch him, if you please, marm,' I said just as I threw the piece down; 'see how he'll relish this bit of bread.' And the little span'l bolted it eagerly and asked for more.

Well, her Ladyship was so pleased that she gave me a five-pound note over and above my charges; and I said thank you very much and good morning. I was just going out through the door when she called me back. 'O Mr Spill, I forgot to ask you. Are you quite sure the dear little pet has been well washed?'

I couldn't help smiling a bit, sir, as I answered her: 'O yes marm; I warrant you he's been well tubbed!'

JACK QUARTERMAIN'S VISION.

IN THREE PARTS.—PART III.—HOME.

It was the first of February—a raw, gray, foggy, miserable morning. The streets were damp and sticky, as only the London streets during or after a fog can be, and the east wind was keen and cutting. A four-wheeled cab stood outside a gloomy house in Westminster; and the driver, who stood on the pavement, clapping his benumbed hands and stamping his half-frozen feet, grumbled audibly at being kept waiting. Presently another cab drove up; and two gentlemen alighted—rough-

looking, weather-stained, weary travellers, but gentlemen still, in spite of their strange garments and shaggy beards.

'Here's the house, old fellow,' exclaimed Jack Quartermain—for it was he—running up the steps. 'It don't look a scrap changed. I wonder if Burnet the old butler is here still?'

Old Burnet was; and in answer to Jack's loud knock he opened the door with his usual stately solemnity, and surveyed the two strange-looking visitors critically.

'Mr Verschoyle in?' inquired Jack hurriedly. 'Can I see him?'

'No sir,' replied Burnet, straightening himself up, and looking peculiarly solemn. 'He's not in, sir. In fact, Mr Verschoyle is dead, sir!'

'Dead! Burnet? Uncle Harry dead! When did he die?' stammered Jack, growing very white and shaking like a leaf.—'Is it possible that you don't remember me, Burnet—Jack Quartermain!'

'No sir—yes sir—of course, Mr John. Come in sir—come in. Oh, why didn't you come back sooner? Why did you ever go, Mr John? Things have gone wrong entirely ever since the day you left,' said Burnet, leading the way to the dining-room, where Mr Valentine Saunders was having his breakfast. For a moment he looked startled, then advanced to greet his old friend with outstretched arms. But Jack waved him back, and looking him steadily in the face, demanded to know what had befallen his uncle Mr Verschoyle.

'Alas, I grieve to tell you, Jack, that dear Mr Verschoyle is no more. He died on the first of January from'—

'From an overdose of opium, administered to him by—a friend. I know all about it, Mr Saunders. Will you be good enough to tell me how you come to be here in my uncle's house?'

'Your uncle was kind enough to remember me in his will, and bequeath me not only this house, but the remainder of his property, on condition that I agreed to marry his ward Miss Hamilton. And though the lady does not choose to agree to the conditions of the will, the house, nevertheless, becomes mine.—And now, may I ask what your business is here, Mr Quartermain?' continued Valentine, with an attempt at ease and hauteur which his pale face and trembling voice belied. 'I should have thought London, and above all the office of Verschoyle and Saunders—or Saunders and Saunders, as the firm now is—would be about the last place in the world you would care to shew your face in, considering the circumstances under which you left our employment!'

'You'll know my business soon enough,' quoth Quartermain sternly. 'At present I demand to know what has become of Miss Hamilton?'

'That you must find out for yourself. I decline to give you any information whatever. If you had come here in a proper spirit'—

'Take care,' said the other with a threatening look.—'Take care of what you say, Valentine Saunders, or even my old friendship for you won't save you. I should like to see a copy of my uncle's will!'

'Certainly, by all means. You can see it at Doctors' Commons!'

'Yes; I know that. But I can see it without going there, and I mean to. You can tell me where there is a copy—a rough copy, to be found.'

'What do you mean?' cried Val, growing hot and confused before the stern steady glance of Jack. 'You talk in riddles, Mr Quartermain!'

'Yes; but you've got the key. Mr Saunders, you know there's a day of squaring up for everybody, if not in this world, in the next. The day for squaring accounts between you and me has come. Now, once and for all, will you produce that will, or shall I have to find it myself?'

Mr Saunders's answer was a violent ring, which was speedily answered by Burnet. 'Shew these persons out,' he exclaimed excitedly—'shew them out instantly!'

'What has become of Miss Jessie, Burnet?' inquired Jack, turning to the old servant, and quite ignoring Mr Saunders's words. 'Has she been turned out too?'

'Pretty nearly, sir—at least she's going. There's her box in the hall, and the cab waiting at the door. But Sister Agnes says she's not fit to leave the house such a morning as this!'

'But why is she going?'

Burnet elevated his eyebrows, shrugged his shoulders, and gave an expressive glance at his master, who was standing silent with rage and amazement.

'Why is Miss Hamilton leaving this house?' repeated Quartermain sternly.

'Here she's down, Mr John; she'd best answer for herself,' cried Burnet, throwing open the dining-room door.—'Miss Jessie—Miss Jessie, here's Mr Quartermain come back again!'

For a moment Miss Hamilton stood in the door-way, white, scared, trembling; then she staggered forward with a low cry between a sob and a moan: 'Jack! O Jack! Why did you not come before?'

'My child, this will never do; you must not excite yourself so,' interrupted Sister Agnes gently.—'She is weak and ill, sir; she cannot stand much fatigue.'

But Jack waved her away, and held Jessie close in his arms. 'My darling!' he whispered, 'are you really mine still?'

'Now, as always, Jack. But you—they told me—you were married; that you had given me up. But I never quite believed it.'

'It was a falsehood, darling, for which I mean to have rare satisfaction,' quoth Jack reassuringly, with a dangerous look at Mr Saunders. 'Sit down, my own, and do not attempt to leave the house.—This lady, is she a friend of yours?'

'Yes, Jack; such a dear friend! I think I should have died long ago had it not been for Sister Agnes. 'Oh, I have suffered—I have suffered so much!'

'It's all at an end now, Jessie; and I've come back to square up with my dear, loyal, old friend Val. I've brought another old friend with me—just to see fair-play, you know.—Don't look so scared, Dan; Val was always fonder of fair words than blows.'

Dan Kennedy meanwhile was gazing in stupefied wonder at the lady who was addressed as Sister Agnes—a pale, dark-eyed, sad-looking woman, with a sweet tremulous voice, who sat beside Jessie, and held one of her hands, and never raised her eyes from the carpet. There was but one woman in the world with such a face, and her name was Agnes too. A strange coincidence, but nothing more. The Agnes of

his dreams was rich, honoured, happy, safe from all sorrow and care, surrounded by every luxury. The Agnes who sat beside Jessie Hamilton looked a weary, stricken woman, who had found peace after many fierce sorrows. Still Dan gazed, longing for her to raise her eyes, that he might look into them, and learn if she was indeed the Agnes of his dreams.

'Well sir, what other liberties do you mean to take in my house?' queried Saunders, after a few minutes' silence. 'I am getting weary of this farce.'

'So am I—and I mean to end it,' retorted Jack sternly. 'First of all, I want to know why you never replied to my letters?'

'I suppose I was at liberty to please myself on that point,' was the sullen answer.

'Certainly; but not at liberty to intercept my letters to Miss Hamilton, or her replies to me; not at liberty to keep back my uncle's letters by any manner of means, Mr Saunders; not at liberty to tell him all sorts of falsehoods about me; not at liberty to work upon his weakness to make you his heir.—You look surprised, Jessie, and no wonder; but there's worse still to be told. Valentine Saunders stole the deeds from Uncle Harry's office; Valentine Saunders stole all my letters to you, and yours to me; Valentine Saunders stole my uncle's last will, and forged one in its stead; and if you will all do me the favour to follow me up-stairs to his room—the room that was mine long ago, and from which his falsehood and treachery banished me—I will shew you the proof of what I say.—Come, Jessie; come, Dan; and you, Madam; and Burnet, you had better come too.' Quartermain pronounced the foregoing accusations calmly, and like a man who was repeating a task he had learned by rote; and then led the way up-stairs into Mr Saunders's room. Opposite to the fireplace, there stood a tall, old-fashioned, ebony bureau, inlaid and mounted with brass. It was a quaint ungainly piece of furniture, full of little odd drawers and unsuspected cavities. One of these, at the back of the bottom drawer, opened with a spring, and there securely reposed the stolen deeds, the intercepted letters, and Mr Verschoyle's will.

'Why, Jack, how did you know? Who told you of this?' exclaimed Jessie in amazement. 'Look! Here are all my letters to you, which I am quite sure I put in the bag myself. How did they get here, Jack?'

'In the same manner that mine got here. There has been some rare clever villainy at work, and Val Saunders is at the bottom of it!'

'If you mean that loafer down-stairs, you had better look after him,' remarked Dan. 'He seems a slippery sort of customer, and I should not wonder if he thought discretion the better part of valour and retired. He looked a little "slopy" as we left the room.'

'Run down, Burnet, and see if Mr Saunders is still below,' Jack said. He was not inclined to be very hard on his old friend, villain and traitor though he was; and if he chose to make his escape and keep out of the way, so much the better.

Presently Burnet returned with a very long face. 'He's gone, sir; cut and run like a rascal, as he is. He left in the cab that was waitin' for Miss Jessie!'

'Well, let him go. As you once observed, Dan, he's a good riddance of very questionable value!'

'Yes sir,' remarked Burnet gravely. 'But if he's not looked after, he may take some very good value with him. How do you know he's not gone straight to the Bank to draw out a lot of money—thousands maybe? I'd just drive round to the Westminster and County, Mr John, if I was you, and stop his little game!'

'That's a happy thought of yours, Burnet.—You stay here, Dan. By the way, I have not introduced you yet.—Jessie, this is my friend and fellow-campaigner, the best fellow in the world—Dan Kennedy.'

Jessie held out her hand with a smile of welcome; and Sister Agnes, who stood beside her, started, raised her dark eyes in wonder, and looked steadily at the tall 'campaigner,' who regarded her with equal astonishment. 'I think I had the honour of knowing Mrs Lawson once,' he said with evident confusion.

'Not Mrs Lawson, Mr Kennedy—Agnes Oxenford still,' faltered the lady. 'It is indeed a fortunate meeting this, Mr Kennedy. I have so much to tell you, so much to explain, so much to—'

'Forgive, if indeed you *can* forgive me,' Dan whispered; and then Jessie and Jack left the room together; and when the former returned, she found that Mr Kennedy and Miss Agnes Oxenford were on remarkably friendly terms.

'Dan and I are old old friends, Jessie,' exclaimed Agnes, with a glad light in her eyes, which seemed to illuminate her whole face. 'We were parted years ago, by circumstances, and misunderstandings have kept us separate; but—'

'But they are all explained now,' interrupted Dan, throwing back his head proudly. 'And if anything could add to the happiness of finding Agnes, it would be that of finding her your friend, Miss Hamilton!'

That was a pretty compliment for a rough backwoodsman, and all very well in its way; but Jessie was somewhat taken aback at the proprietary and lover-like air assumed by Mr Kennedy. 'Agnes is a Sister of Mercy,' she explained in the tone of a person in a very serious difficulty; she could not quite reconcile love-making with the solemn black draperies and hideous bonnet of Sister Agnes.

'Yes, yes; I know,' replied Dan with a little shrug; 'and I hope she will continue one, Miss Hamilton; only she must limit her ministrations to one unworthy individual, who is sorely in need of mercy and charity and all other Christian offices. She tells me duty is always her first and dearest consideration, and I'm quite satisfied it's her duty to look after me, or I'll come to grief most certainly!'

'Besides, Jessie, remember I'm only a probationer,' interposed Agnes sweetly; and so Miss Oxenford's mission of mercy became considerably curtailed.

Presently Jack Quartermain returned. Mr Saunders had not been to the bank, nor called at the office. All valuable bonds and papers were there quite safe; and Jack had locked them all up in the great safe, and taken away the key, to the horror and amazement of old Mr Saunders. Then Dan and Jack examined the will, which was dated nearly five years before, and in which, to his dear

and only nephew, John Henry Quartermain, was Mr Verschoyle's wealth bequeathed, with the exception of a five thousand pound legacy to Jessie Hamilton, and a wish that his heir might make good the full amount, principal and interest, endangered by the disappearance of Miss Hamilton's bonds. Landed property, money in the funds, and three-fourths of the large business profits of Verschoyle and Saunders, came to Jack; but there was no mention whatever made about Valentine Saunders, or any conditions attached to either Miss Hamilton's legacy or her own fortune.

'Now then, Jessie, can you explain to me how Uncle Harry came to alter his mind and leave all his money to Val Saunders? There must have been some undue influence!'

'Yes indeed, Jack. About four years ago, Val came to live here; and from that time Uncle Harry was a different being. He would scarcely ever see me, refused to hear your name mentioned, and consulted Val about everything. Then he fell into ill health, and for a long time Mr Saunders was his only nurse. At last the doctor insisted on his having some one else, and sent us dear Sister Agnes. Uncle soon recovered then, and seemed in much better health and spirits. He even spoke about you, and wondered why you never wrote, and told me that he had made his will long ago—and you and I were provided for. Then Val told me that you were married to a wealthy American lady, and had actually the audacity to ask me to become his wife. Of course I refused him indignantly; and from that day forth he set himself to be my enemy. I was completely cut off from my uncle, and the only friend I had was dear Sister Agnes. It was very wretched here, Jack. I don't know whether Mr Saunders's persecution or affection was the most intolerable; but both together drove me distracted. Then in December poor Uncle grew worse. Several doctors were called in, and they all declared that he was sinking fast. Val was ever by his bedside, a most watchful if not very tender nurse. On New-year's Eve, about twelve o'clock, Uncle seemed to rouse up from a stupor he had been in for days, and called for me. I was resting on a couch in my own room, when Sister Agnes came to fetch me'—

'Let me tell you the rest,' Jack interrupted. 'You ran down-stairs; and as you entered Uncle Harry's dressing-room, Val was pouring out his medicine. He handed you the glass, to give him the draught, when you went in; and his hand trembled so that some of it was spilled over the white shawl you had wrapped round your shoulders. When you entered the room, Uncle sat up in bed, and said in a loud clear voice: "Jessie, I have provided for you and Jack. My will lies in the old cabinet in Val's room. Tell Jack, if ever you see him, that I fear I wronged him, and am sorry." Then he held out his hand for the medicine, drank it off, and lay back on his pillow. In a few moments he started up and called me, clearly and distinctly: "Jack—Jack Quartermain, come here!" then he closed his eyes and fell asleep. In the morning they told you he was dead!'

'Ay, that is precisely what happened. Who on earth could have told you!'

'No one told me,' replied John Quartermain

calmly. 'I saw it all, just as clearly as I see you now; and I saw Val take Uncle's will out of the cabinet, and put another in its stead. I saw him distinctly open the secret drawer, throw the true will in with a grim smile, and heard him mutter: "That may go to oblivion with the rest." I saw it all, Jessie, plainly and visibly; and the proof of the matter is here,' pointing to the will and the letters. 'I told Dan about it on New-year's Day—told him as we drove through the blinding snow, and across the solitary plains of Nebraska, that my uncle was lying dead in the gloomy old house in Westminster. He smiled incredulously, and endeavoured to reason me out of my fears; but he knew in his heart that what I said was true.—Didn't you, Dan?'

'Yes; I think I did, Jack,' said Dan solemnly.

'But I cannot understand it,' cried Jessie, staring in hopeless bewilderment. 'I don't believe in dreams and visions and things!'

'Well, I don't believe in them either in general. But in a case like this, you must either believe or be a fool. Certain things were revealed to me on New-year's Eve. I come home to England, and find them perfectly true. But I can no more pretend to explain the why or the wherefore of it than you can. I am willing to take the matter as it stands, and be grateful for the beneficial results.'

'But Jack dear, if you make a practice of second-sight, I shall be afraid of you.'

'Nonsense, Jessie. Why should you be? Besides, I do not think such revelations ever happen twice in a lifetime,' replied Jack earnestly. 'And now, I really think the best thing we can do is to say no more about it, for it is one of those mysterious coincidences that no amount of discussion can elucidate. Tell me, Jessie, why were you going away this morning, and where were you going to?'

'I was going, because I could never consent to become Val Saunders's wife; and in the will read after the funeral that was an expressed condition. I was to have half my uncle's fortune if I married him; if not, I was to be penniless. I infinitely preferred poverty to such a union. So I was going to learn to be a nurse, like Sister Agnes!'

'Then it appears to me that we only arrived just in time. The discovery of this will saves all that painful necessity; but of course we must prove that the one by which Val claimed the property is a forgery. It may be somewhat difficult to do; but his flight is strong circumstantial evidence. Have you any idea where this precious document is, Jessie?'

'In the study probably; or at least a copy of it, if the document itself is gone to Doctors' Commons.'

'True. I remember Val said it was there; but somehow I don't believe it. Come down to the study, and let us have a look round.'

They had not to look very long. A fire was burning on the hearth, and on it and inside the fender were fragments of half-burned paper. 'That's it!' Jessie cried out. 'I know it was written on blue foolscap. I'm sure this is the will!'

'Or all that remains of it. And here's proof positive,' Jack added, taking up a scrap of paper on which some words were hastily scrawled: 'The Last Will of Mr Verschoyle is in the ebony cabinet in my room. I leave the country to-day; it will

be useless to try to follow or discover me. I am sorry for all that has occurred.—V. S.'

'This simplifies matters considerably; doesn't it, Dan? I really find it in my heart to be almost sorry for him.'

'I think he was punished, Jack. I think he lived in constant terror of discovery. During the last month, his life seemed a sad burden to him. Surely the way of the transgressor is hard!'

'Heaven help him, the poor wretch! I at all events forgive him, and hope he may live to amend his ways,' said Jack, to Jessie's sighed 'Amen!'

Two months after, there was a very quiet wedding in St Margaret's, Westminster. Jack and Jessie were united at last, after all their weary years of doubts and fears and hopes deferred; and they still live in the quiet gloomy old house in George Street. The firm is now Quartermain and Saunders; for Jack kept on the old man, who was hardly accountable for his son's misdeeds. There is serious talk of making the firm Quartermain, Saunders, and Kennedy; for Dan has not yet returned to 'Kennedy's Clearing;' and whenever he talks of doing so, his words are drowned in a chorus of reproachful negatives. He and Agnes are married, and live tolerably happily in Sloan Square; though Dan often longs for the freedom of the forest, and the rough and ready luxury of the log-cabin at Nebraska. If Agnes would only consent to accompany him, he would once more pack the calf-skin trunk, and start thither without delay. But every other year brings a fresh fetter to bind Agnes to her English home, and Kennedy's Clearing recedes farther and farther into the dim distance of the past. Even Dan himself is beginning to feel that he is chained by sundry clinging tiny arms, and persuaded to remain at home, as *Paterfamilias* should, by soft hissing voices.

Jack and Jessie love the old house in George Street, and are superlatively happy there. Nothing could induce them to change it for a gayer or more suburban residence. It is such a famous house to be cosy and comfortable, and even romantic in, nestling as it does under the shadow of the dear old Abbey, and possessing out-of-the-way nooks and corners innumerable. Often on the long cold winter evenings, when Dan with his great pipe is comfortably settled in one corner, and Jack in the other, and Jessie and Agnes with their knitting or embroidery seated on low chairs before the great fire, Jack relates how he and Dan first chummed together, and recounts some of the adventures and dangers which Dan and he shared in the Far West and in Australia; and scarcely ever a New-year's Eve passes by that Dan does not solemnly allude to Jack Quartermain's Vision, and its happy results.

P.S.—From the day Val Saunders left the old house in George Street to this, he has never been heard of. Year after year, Jack and Jessie and his poor feeble old father expect him to return—poor and penitent; or poor, without being penitent; or penitent, without being poor. Year after year Jack wonders what has become of him, and sometimes thinks he must be dead. In all probability he is. He had not the qualifications necessary for a magnificent sinner. Failure would be worse than death to a man of his temperament;

and the overthrow of all his plans was complete. But time alone can discover what has become of him; and his friends—or rather those who had been his friends—earnestly hope that he has repented of his wickedness and ingratitude; and learned that honesty is still the best policy.

A MYSTERIOUS PIANIST.

ABOUT a year ago, I observed in the columns of this *Journal* an article in explanation of certain aural phenomena which are frequently ascribed to supernatural agency. Many similar events must frequently occur which are not recorded, and whose causes, owing to superstition or fear, remain undiscovered. An investigation of all such seeming mysteries at the time and in the place where they occur, might save many a one an infinity of discomposing thoughts, which not seldom end in the reception of a most absurd belief. If the veracity of the following narrative be questioned, names and places can afford no proof. I can therefore only assure the reader that the narrative is true to the minutest particular, and was jotted down while the circumstances were fresh in my memory.

On the last day of 1879 I left home to pay my annual visit to my widowed mother and deliver my new-year greetings in person. On my arrival, I found a number of old friends assembled to exchange good wishes and usher in the dawn of the new year. As the company was dispersing, some one suggested a song; and as I was credited with some ability in that direction, I was at once appealed to. I consented; and we adjourned to another room, where my sister's piano had stood untouched since her lamented death, which had happened two years before. It was an old instrument, of six and a half octaves, of the Cottage shape, with nothing remarkable about it save that solid substantial look which is so foreign to many articles of modern furniture. I sat down and rattled off a few rollicking ditties suited to the occasion, winding up with the ever-new *Auld Lang Syne* as our guests departed. I noticed while playing that the instrument was much out of tune, and that several of the levers were disordered or displaced. I specially noted that one wire of the C in the fifth octave was much flatter than the other, which gave the note a peculiar and easily recognisable sound.

As I was to sleep in the apartment, I sat down by the fire to smoke a pipe and muse on the changes time had wrought on the little world of my boyhood. The key-board of the instrument glistening in the firelight insensibly led my thoughts to that vanished hand that had so often nimbly and skilfully pressed it. Only two short years ago she had sat there singing my favourite airs with the rich mellow voice that was hers alone. As wave after wave of memory surged over my heart, I became so abstracted that I fancied I heard the cadence of her beautiful voice like the distant echo in a dream.

I remembered too that the last song I heard her sing was that touching melody wedded to the words of Burns's weird song, *Open the Door to me, Oh*. With my mind's ear I heard the pathetic wail with which the melody concludes, and was just on the point of awaking from my day-dream, when the piano at my side slowly and distinctly repeated the last simple bar of the music, with the faulty C for key-note. I was not startled; the mysterious accompaniment was so in unison with my reverie, that it was some minutes before I realised what had occurred. My first idea was that, by long disuse, some of the hammers had become relaxed and had fallen forward on the strings. But on trying the notes, I found they responded readily to the touch. For some time I tried to solve the enigma; but at length coming to the conclusion that I had been duped by my own ears, I shut down the key-board, and jumped into bed, where I was soon unconscious of mortal and spirit alike.

I had slumbered for some time, when I suddenly awoke with that stinging sensation over the whole body which, with me, always betokens nervous excitement; and lo! the piano was sounding. I sat bolt upright; tried to shake off the hallucination, and listened again. There was no denying the fact. Some invisible power was touching both the bass and treble notes. I struggled against an eerie feeling that began to creep over me, and tried to reason. Judging from a former experience, I thought it might be some animal traversing the wires; but then I reflected that that was impossible in their perpendicular position; neither could any animal agitate both treble and bass at the same time, as my ear informed me was being done. Mustering courage, I jumped out of bed, and approached quietly, when the performance suddenly ceased. I opened the key-board and the top lid, peered into every nook and cranny, examined the floor and wall; but could discover nothing. I stirred up the fire, and sat down with my face towards the instrument. In this position I distinctly saw several of the keys *move* with a gentle undulating motion; but no sound followed. While I sat, this was repeated more than once, and the peculiarity was, that when the keys moved there was no sound, and when the sounds were produced there was no perceptible motion of the keys. I felt the eerie feeling steal over me again, but still sat and watched for a repetition of the music.

My patience was all but exhausted, when all at once the mystical performer resumed his playing, at first in an undecided hesitating manner, gradually merging into plaintive irregular kind of notes, of which the faulty C was again the key. When the sounds first struck the ear, they seemed to be weak and faint, but gradually increased in volume. The treble movement was now and then accompanied by a chromatic movement on the bass notes, which though not in accordance with

the rules of harmony, was not unpleasant to the ear. At times too, the treble made a rapid run to the highest possible note; then after a pause, the irregular notes were resumed. Seizing a moment when the mysterious performer seemed much engrossed with his task, I darted to the instrument, when the sounds again ceased, without affording a single clue to their origin. I endeavoured to open the front; but it resisted my efforts; and as I did not wish to alarm the household, I drew the piano forward from the wall, gave it a parting shake, and once more curled myself up in the bed-clothes, not without a fervent prayer that the player might transfer his musical entertainment to a more appreciative audience. All, however, was unavailing; for he shortly began again as brisk as ever; so bowing to the inevitable, I endeavoured to convert the disturbing performance into a well-intentioned lullaby. As I thus lay in a half-sleeping half-waking state, no longer interested in the cause of the phenomenon, I was conscious of a curious result. The strains seemed to adapt themselves to snatches—mere snatches, of familiar airs, curiously blended and interwoven. As soon as an interval occurred that reminded me of another jingle, it was immediately taken up only to give place to another. The range of the treble seemed to be confined to the third below the faulty note and the fourth above, which of course accounted for the plaintive character of the music. I cannot say how long this curious phase lasted. I have, however, a hazy consciousness of dropping off to sleep, lulled by these unaccountable note-ramblings.

In the morning I learned that none of the inmates had heard anything unusual during the night. Being, however, determined to solve the puzzle, I lost no time in returning to the room armed with a screw-driver. When I had laid bare the front of the instrument, I observed that the wires of the note adjacent to the faulty one had snapped, and its perpendicular lever had been disjoined from the hammer and fallen forward on the strings, thus forming an opening between the back and front, and establishing a communication between the wires and the lower or horizontal levers to which the ivories are attached. Still no key to the riddle presented itself. I then proceeded to remove the levers one by one, and had partially accomplished the task, when the Gordian knot of the mystery was severed in a rather prosaic manner. I pushed the instrument back to its original position, when out scampered—not one mouse—but two, by the slit in the back which serves for a handle. They ran along the wainscoting, which happened to be on the same level, and disappeared in a press in the corner of the room. It was plain that my mystic performer had resolved himself into the commonplace of a couple of mice, whose performances had been prolonged by the cutting off of their retreat. Still I comforted myself with the thought that, if I kept my own counsel, there was material enough to prove me a first-class spiritualistic medium!

An examination of their *modus operandi* explained in a very simple manner the awe-inspiring phenomena of the previous night. Mouse

No. 1, on popping through the opening in the perpendicular levers, climbed the broken one that lay handy, perched upon the end in contact with the wires, and in his efforts to ascend farther, or in the mere pleasure of the sound, produced the melody before referred to. Mouse No. 2, meanwhile condemned to play second-fiddle, amused himself by creeping through between the snapped wires and scampering up and down inside, where there was barely room for him to pass, and thus contributed the rumbling bass and the occasional sharp runs on the higher notes. A cross-bar for strengthening the front gave him foothold; and vestiges of his fur on the larger wires rendered the explanation more than a probability. The motion of the keys without the corresponding sounds, must have been occasioned by their pattering on the extreme ends of the horizontal levers, the majority of which I found to be somewhat worn and loose in their sockets. The contingent phenomena I believe to have been merely the unconscious promptings of my own mind, or of what may be termed my musical imagination.

On recounting the adventure at the breakfast-table, I discovered that the mysterious sounds had been heard by another member of the family on a quiet Sabbath afternoon some weeks previous: she, however, had been deterred from mentioning the circumstance from fear of the ridicule she supposed would have followed her recital. I may mention that the press in the room contained a goodly store of things seductive to the stomachs of mice in general. That they disregarded the tempting viands and betook themselves to the unproductive waste of the interior of a piano, must help to prove that the love of music often ascribed to this little quadruped is a fact of natural history resting on a more solid foundation than exceptional eccentricity.

[Though at first sight the foregoing tale—the truth of which is vouched for by our contributor—may appear somewhat weird, we gladly place it before our readers as offering additional testimony to the fact that ‘unaccountable sounds’ are in every case capable of being relegated to natural causes. A little trouble bestowed upon their calm investigation would, as our writer says, ‘save many a one an infinity of discomposing thoughts.’—ED.]

FEET-DISTORTION IN CHINA.

OF all the abominations in female fashions, the Chinese practice of cramping and deforming the feet is the most iniquitous. The following are the latest particulars regarding this old and very odious custom.

It appears that the foot-binding of female infants in China is determined by locality rather than by the rank and wealth of the people who practise it. In the department of Tie-Chiu, province of Canton, it would be general but for the Hakkas, who settle there, and are strongly opposed to it. When they come in any numbers from their own country—which is contiguous—and take up their abode in Tie-Chiu villages, they use their influence and example against it pretty successfully. Of the women who attend the missionary schools in Swatow, at present about six in every ten have their feet bound; and the

Hakka influence is apparent in the fact that it is not an uncommon thing now for young women to bind their feet loosely just for a short time before marriage, and then unbind them afterwards. But occasionally they wear the bandage too long, in which case the foot remains crooked. The old women too have a way of dressing their feet so as to make them look extremely small on grand occasions, while they remain conveniently large for use when they have to travel or work.

The binding of a child's feet is not begun until she has learned to walk and do certain things for herself, as it would be difficult, if not impossible, to teach her afterwards. The rich bind their children's feet from the sixth or seventh year; but the poor do not begin until they are twelve, or even older. Parents who have been forced by poverty to sell a daughter as a slave when she was a child, will bring her back afterwards if they can; and then, no matter how old she is, they bind up her feet and marry her as a lady. But the pain of binding a full-grown foot is said to be most intense. Strong white bandages two inches wide are manufactured for the purpose. Those worn the first year are two yards long, and about five feet is the length worn afterwards. The following, according to Miss Fielde, is the method adopted: 'The end of the strip is laid on the inside of the foot at the instep, then carried over the top of the toes and under the foot, drawing the four toes with it down upon the sole; thence it is passed over the foot and around the heel; and by this stretch the toes and the heel are drawn together, leaving a bulge on the instep and a deep indentation in the sole, under the instep. This course is gone over in successive layers of bandage, until the strip of cloth is all used, and the final end is sown tight down.' To please a Chinawoman, the 'indentation' must measure about an inch and a half from the part of the foot which rests on the ground up to the instep. The toes are then completely drawn over the sole, and the foot is so squeezed upwards, that in walking, only the ball of the great toe touches the ground.

Large quantities of powdered alum are used when the feet are first bound, and always afterwards, to prevent ulceration and lessen the offensive odour. The bandage is taken off only once a month. At the end of the first month the foot is put in hot water, and after it has been allowed to soak some time, the bandage is carefully unwound; 'the dead cuticle, of which there is much, being abraded during the process of unbinding. When the foot is entirely unbound, it is not unusual to find ulcers and other abominations. Frequently too,' we are told, 'a large piece of flesh sloughs off the sole, and it sometimes happens that one or two toes drop off.' When this happens, the patient considers herself amply repaid for the additional suffering by having smaller and more delicate feet than her neighbours! Indeed the desire to have small feet is so intense that girls will slily tighten their own bandages in spite of the pain!

Each time the bandage is taken off 'the foot is kneaded,' to make the joints flexible, and is then bound up again as quickly as possible with a fresh bandage; and the foot is drawn more tightly together each time. During the first year the pain is so intense that the sufferer can do nothing. When

she goes out, she has to be carried. Indoors, she moves about by kneeling on two stools. At night, she lies on her back across her bed, 'allowing the edge of the board bedstead to come under the knee and press on the cords in such a way as to benumb the lower limbs.' For about two years the foot aches continually, the pain being 'most severe in the ankle-bone, joints, and instep.' The aching is varied or accompanied by another pain like the pricking of 'sharp needles piercing the flesh.' If the binding is kept up rigorously, in two years 'the foot is dead and ceases to ache. But by this time the whole leg from the knee downwards has become shrunken; being little more than skin and bone.' The Chinese lady may then boast of her 'golden lilies,' and decorate them with tiny embroidered slippers, half an inch wide and three inches long in the sole. The Tie-Chiu women fasten the slipper 'to a band of blue cloth, which passes around the heel and is attached to a gaily painted wooden heel, on which the whole weight of the body falls in walking; the toe being elevated an inch or more above the ground. A very narrow "pantalet" of cotton or silk covers half of the wooden heel and all the instep, so that little more than an inch of the pointed toe of the shoe is visible.'

When once formed, a 'golden lily' can never resume its original shape; and when uncovered, it is so unsightly that women object to taking off their bandages even before members of their own family. The writer has seen long strings of small-footed women walking with their hands on each other's shoulders down the narrow streets of Canton. Many of them were blind, and the Chinese themselves declare that foot-binding causes blindness. But their obstinate adherence to this painful and barbarous custom, in spite of the many objections, which they themselves acknowledge to be just, is marvellous. Whatever is 'old fashion' is good, they say; and were it not for the persevering efforts of the English and American missionaries, which are now beginning to take effect, they would probably continue to make, and to rejoice in their 'golden lilies' for ever.

* The quotations are taken from a Report on 'Foot-binding,' written by Miss Norwood, a lady in the American mission at Swatow.

EVEN FALL.

WRATHFULLY in the ruddy West away,
The sun goes down beyond yon upland field,
As though he angry were that one more day
Unto another night is forced to yield.
Anon the West is broken into bars
Of orange, amber, gray, and dusky gold;
And darkness, stealing on, draws out the stars,
Their nightly vigil—long and lone—to hold.
Within yon wood, the last bird-warble fails,
And all the air, emptied of every sound,
Inviolate stillness holds. Above, around,
The calm repose procured of peace prevails—
The calm, the sweet; and now complete o'er all
Hath gloomed the dim, the dusky evenfall.

JAMES DAWSON.

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